

DISCOVERY

Vol 1, Issue 1

series

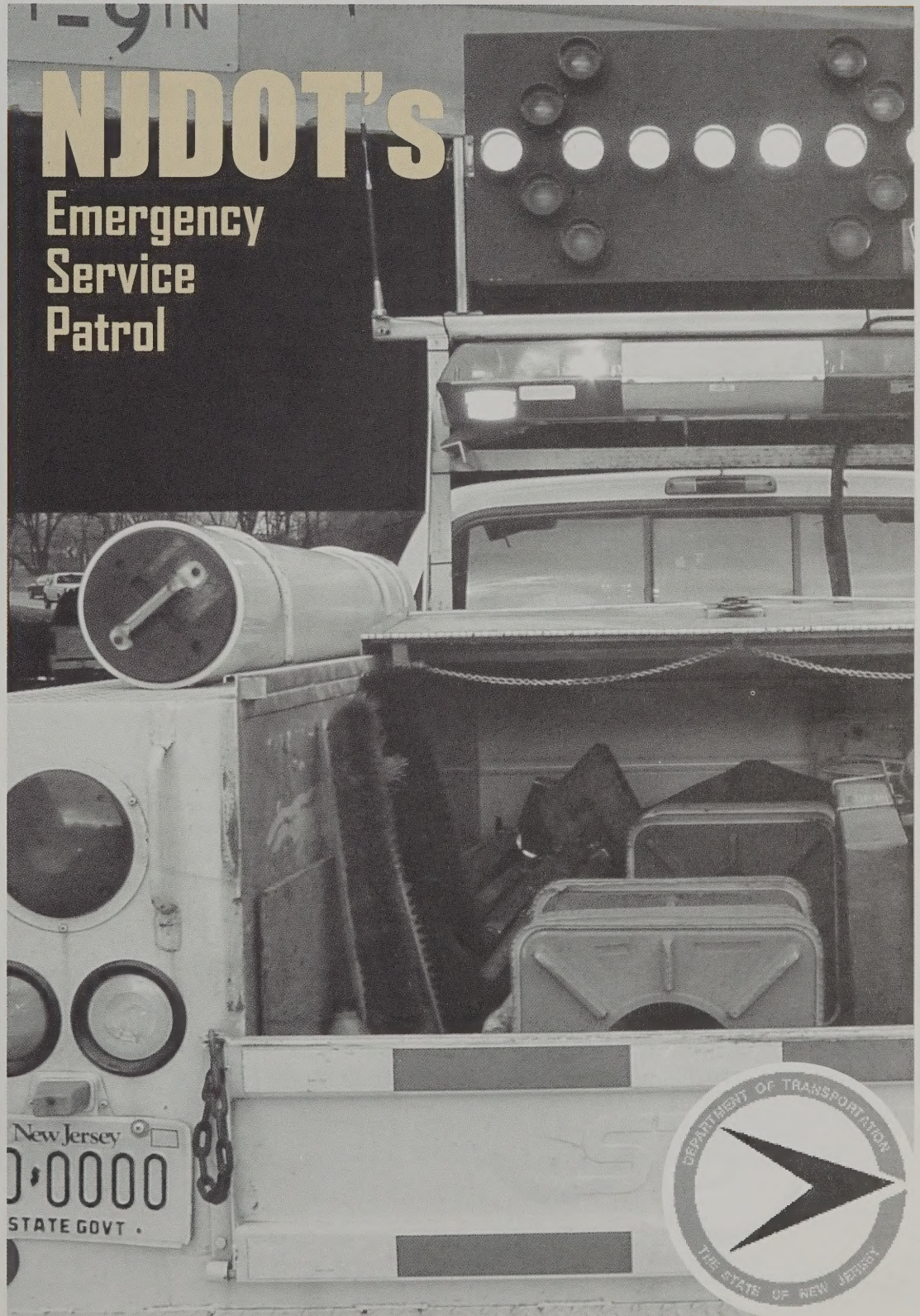
How many of us can say that we never had a problem with a vehicle we were driving, or were a passenger in, as we traveled along a major highway? And, if you were one of the millions of stranded drivers who have suffered some type of vehicle breakdown, wouldn't it be nice to imagine a service that will come find you and get you on your way! Well, whether you know it or not, New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) does offer such a service. It's free, it's fast, and it's staffed by a group of talented and dedicated people that want nothing more than to get you back up and running as soon as possible to speed you on your journey.

What Does ESP Do?

According to Crew Supervisor Charles Patton, the primary purpose of NJDOT's Emergency Service Patrol (ESP) is to remove impediments to traffic flow on State highways as quickly as possible. These impediments can mean anything from stalled vehicles and accidents, to materials on the roadway and activities resulting in rubbernecking. As a result, ESP personnel go through a month of intensive training, including basic first aid, CPR, fire and safety, light duty towing, defensive driving, and providing specific levels of assistance, including:

- Pushing vehicles off the roadway surface to safety
- Changing a flat tire
- Jump-starting a vehicle
- Unlocking a vehicle
- Providing a minimal supply of gas for vehicles needing fuel
- Calling a tow truck or emergency service

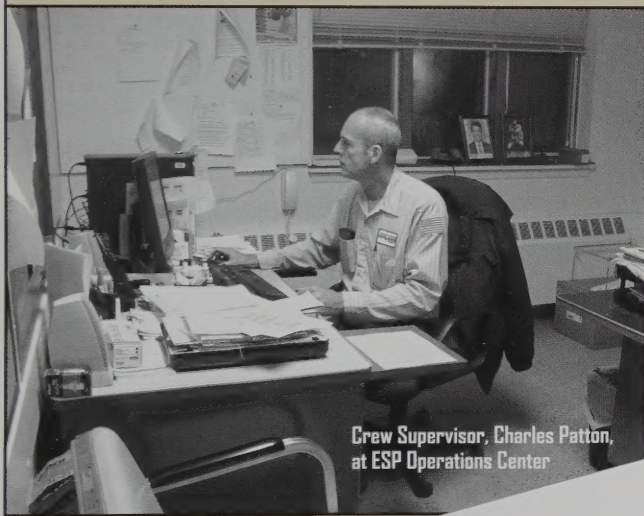
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<< What Does ESP Do? Continued from previous page

- Providing use of a phone to call AAA, loved ones or the office in case of extended delay
- Making small emergency repairs
- Protecting a stranded vehicle and its occupants until help arrives
- Assisting NJ State Police by quickly clearing disabled vehicles from the road

The ESP service uses a dispatch system to report and/or respond to emergency calls. The dispatcher, located at NJDOT's Southern District Traffic Operations Center in Cherry Hill, can also contact, or be contacted by, the NJ State Police, should their presence be needed. ESP personnel will not leave someone stranded with their car and, if they cannot fix the problem, will summon assistance and wait until that assistance has arrived. They may also transport the individual to a public location where they can stay safe and warm while their vehicle is being serviced.



Crew Supervisor, Charles Patton, at ESP Operations Center



A Day in the Life of an ESP Roamer

It's 6 AM on the Tuesday before New Years Day, and I'm anxious to begin my journey with NJDOT's Emergency Service Patrol (ESP). So here I am— it's a little early in the morning for me, but considering that their morning shift actually began at 4 AM, I am keeping my mouth shut so I won't look like a wimp.

I accompany ESP Driver, John Aiken, who is considered a "Roamer" today for the purpose

It's the 10-year anniversary of the Best Little Service you didn't know you had!

of my visit. While the ESP Drivers generally travel their assigned route in a continual pattern, the "Roamer" is free to travel in any pattern and to react to emergencies regardless of their location. In this particular case, we will be traveling along local portions of Routes 295, 55, 676, 76 and 42.

We leave the Cherry Hill headquarters and merge onto Route 295 S and have driven no more than ten minutes when we come upon a one-car accident on the Route 295 S curve right before it intersects with Route 42. The car appears to have been traveling a bit too fast on this rain-slick roadway, and has spun 180 degrees into a wall on the right shoulder. We are the first vehicle on the scene. After pulling over and putting on

his emergency lights to protect the accident victim, John immediately calls in to get the State Police on the scene. He then leaves the ESP vehicle to see if the driver is okay, which fortunately, she is.

Another ESP vehicle which had been assigned to this par-

ticular route is the next vehicle to reach the scene. The second vehicle backs up about 1/4 mile down the shoulder and turns on his caution bar light at the back of the truck. This warns motorists to use caution as they approach accident scene. About three minutes after the ESP vehicles are in position, three State Police vehicles arrive and secure the scene. At the request of the police, the ESP vehicles back into the right lane forcing oncoming traffic into the left lane which allows the arriving tow truck to safely remove the accident. The ESP vehicles remain in position until the scene is completely cleared.

Making our way onto Route 42, we come upon a vehicle in the right shoulder with a flat tire. The driver is removing a spare from his trunk and preparing to jack up his car. However, the car is parked in an unsafe location because it is only a partial shoulder and the side of the car is directly adjacent to the right travel lane. John turns on his caution lights, pulls behind the vehicle and tells the driver that he should drive his car approximately 100 yards to a full shoulder where he will be much safer. John follows the driver to protect him and then pulls up to the back of the car, where he tells the driver that he will take care of the flat tire.

John removes a car jack from the ESP vehicle and turns on the air compressor which provides an air outlet in the front and rear of the ESP vehicle. John uses a pneu-

matic driver and hose to replace the damaged tire with the driver's spare tire. Next, John changes the driver for an air nozzle and fills the spare tire to the proper pressure. John then places the flat tire into the trunk of the driver's vehicle.

Much to the amazement and appreciation of the driver, John is completely finished in less than 5 minutes, and even provides the driver with a moistened towel to wipe his hands. After heaping John with thanks and attempting to tip him (the tip was respectfully refused), the driver is happily on his way: "I have seen the signs along the highways," he tells

me, "but had no idea of the kind of service this represented! I am amazed!"

Our journey continues in this manner, and includes: a tractor-trailer that had its load shift, causing the truck to tilt sideways; a car pulled over trying to secure a bicycle that was sticking out of the trunk (John digs around his truck and comes up with a bungee cord to secure the bike); another flat tire; a mail carrier that is pulled over because he is lost (John gives him directions); another truck pulled over to allow the driver to rest (John checks to make sure he was OK). And all this was before noon!

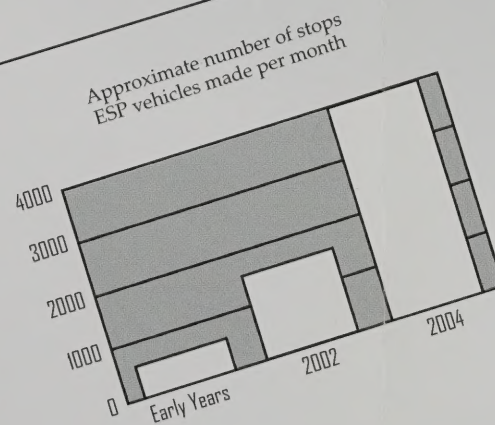
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CCCTMA, Executive Director

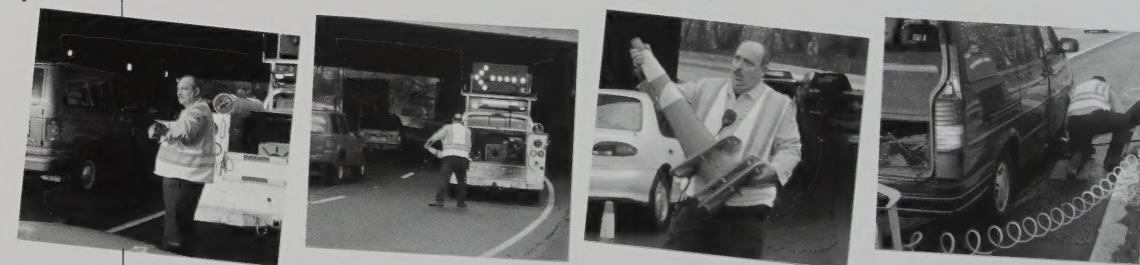
ESP track record

Just how active and successful is the program? Are State highways any safer and more secure because of this service? The answer may surprise you!

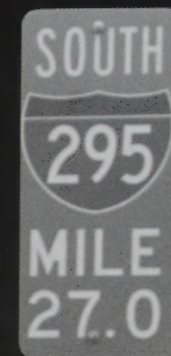
A look at the most recent analysis report (2002) indicates that autos and pick-ups make up about 75% of the vehicles requiring assistance; vans and buses, about 12%; trucks, about 11%; with motorcycles and trailers making up the rest of the stops. Almost 30% of the assistance provided was for the repair of flat tires; 26% needed assistance as a result of mechanical problems; and the ESP even provided directions over 1000 times. And please don't forget to check your gas tank, because almost 10% of the service provided was for vehicles needing fuel!



All In A Day's Work: ESP Driver, John Aiken, providing assistance



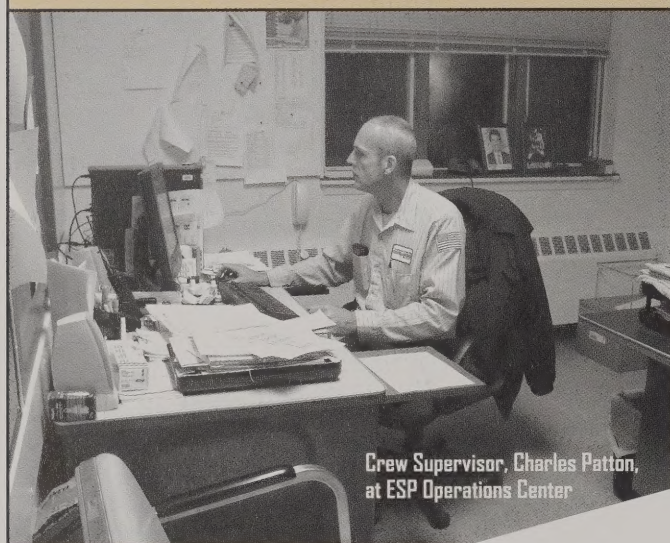
"Thank you, thank you, thank you! You guys are awesome!" —Princeton Junction. "I am grateful! Help arrived within five minutes." —Vineland. "Can't say enough good things! This is a wonderful service." —New Brunswick. "Had no idea of this incredible service." —Columbia, MD. "They were wonderful. I tried to give them a tip and they both refused." —Hainesport.



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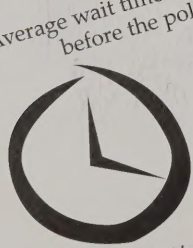
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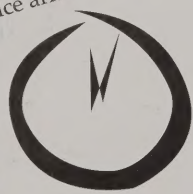
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ESP track record

Average wait time of disabled vehicles before the police arrived



Prior to 1994:
17 minutes

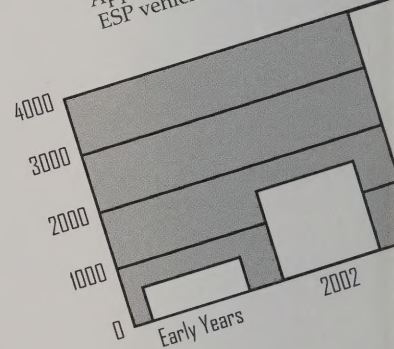


In 2004:
5 minutes

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Approximate number of stops ESP vehicles made per month





Things You Need To Know

- You cannot call the ESP directly, but, if your vehicle gets disabled, you can call 911 and the Police will summon the ESP if required.
- Vehicles involved in minor accidents must remain close to the scene of the accident, and should move out of the way of traffic if capable of doing so.
- Disabled vehicles should be taken away as soon as possible, but can remain for up to 24 hours, except under snow conditions, where they must be removed immediately.
- The NJ State Police Training Academy in Sea Girt spends a full day reviewing traffic operations, the ESP, and the Traffic Operations Center.
- The ESP is 100% federally funded by the US Federal Highway Administration.
- NJDOT and the ESP serve as the eyes and ears of the region, and are one of the State Police's partners in the Amber Alert system.
- In a pilot safety program, NJDOT has begun replacing the old roadway mile markers with markers that indicate the roadway, the direction of travel and the mileage, and are marked on both sides so they can be seen from either direction. This pilot program will be expanding in 2004 to cover more road mileage.
- The ESP has been cited for heroism and actions beyond the call of duty by the Governor's office multiple times. Included in the citation for heroism were occasions of ESP personnel risking their own safety by pulling accident victims from burning vehicles.
- ESP vehicles do not carry diesel fuel and are not equipped to service trucks.



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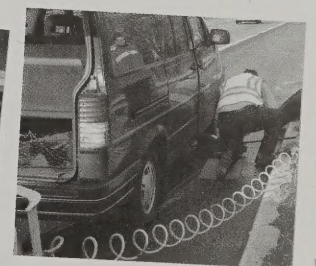
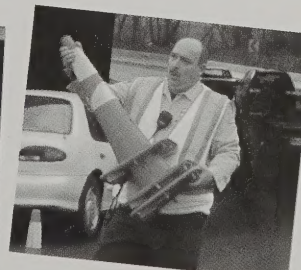
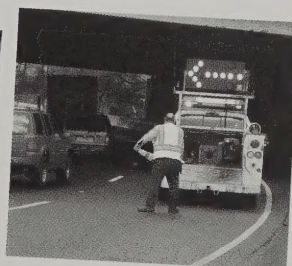
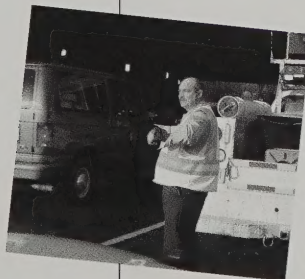
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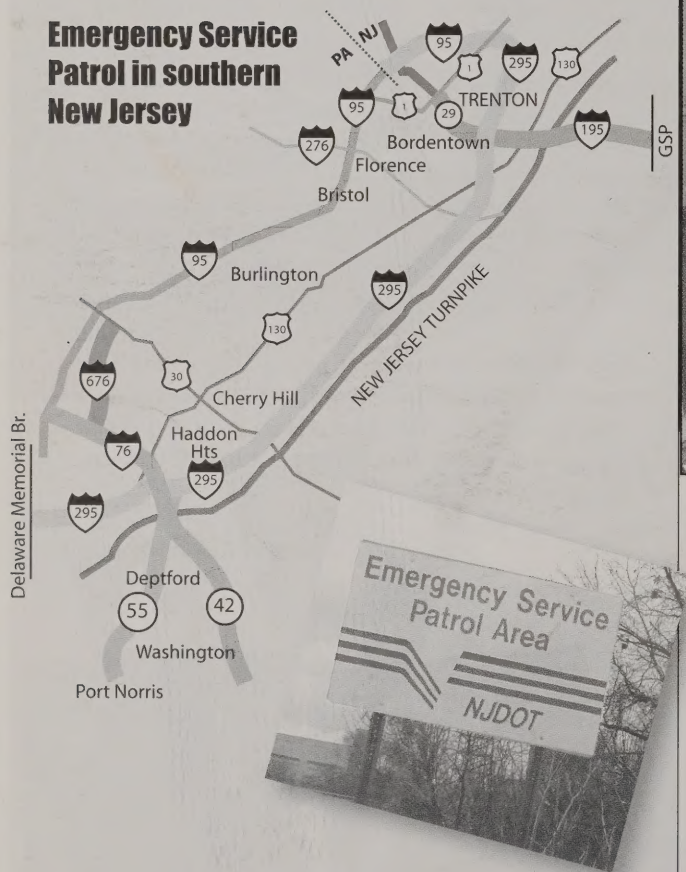
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ESP Service Area in southern New Jersey

NJDOT's Emergency Service Patrol (ESP) began its southern New Jersey service-related mission in January of 1994. As its inaugural mission, the ESP started by patrolling Route 295 in Gloucester and Camden counties. Now, 10 years later, the ESP coverage area has expanded to cover a total of 167 miles. Statewide, NJDOT's ESP currently patrols 392 miles.

South Jersey	
Route	Current Coverage
676	All 4 miles
295	All 67 miles
195	All 34 miles
95	All 9 miles
76	All 2 miles
55	All 40 miles
42	8 miles
29	3 miles

Emergency Service Patrol in southern New Jersey



The ESP currently operates two coverage shifts with 16 vehicles, 7 days a week, from 4 AM until 10:30 PM on weekdays, and 7 AM until 10:30 PM on weekends. This successful service will be adding ten additional vehicles as the service expands the length of its coverage area.

What's In the Truck, Anyway?

Each vehicle is equipped with a variety of tools and equipment, which includes but is not limited to:

- Roof mounted emergency lights
- Arrowboard (lighted emergency signage)
- Jump start system
- Hitches
- Push bumpers
- Two-way radio
- Cellular phone
- Police radio
- Air compressor
- Car jacks
- Tool kit
- Chains
- Air tank
- Lock-out kit
- Portable emergency signs
- Fuel siphoning kit
- Water and antifreeze
- Fire extinguisher
- Flashlights
- First aid kit
- Broom
- Shovel
- Flares, traffic cones, flairs
- Hazardous spill kit
- Absorbent materials for spills
- Hand cleaner and towel dispenser



Like What You See?

Then let us know! If you'd like to receive future issues of the Discovery Series and our quarterly newsletter, please call Cross County Connection at (856) 596-8228 to sign up. Or, you can e-mail us at ccctma@transportationchoices.com.

This publication was produced by:

Cross County Connection Transportation Management Association
2002 D Lincoln Drive West, Marlton, NJ 08053
(856) 596-8228



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